

## Conclusions of the COP8 meeting

The meeting closed doors last Saturday, October 6<sup>th</sup> with these messages as main highlights:

1. **Creating a smokefree generation:** a future without tobacco. That was the statement made by the Netherlands State Secretary for Health, Welfare and Sport, Paul Blokhuis. The Netherlands, country that offered to host next COP9 has stated a strong position towards tobacco control policies. According to Mr Blokhuis, the Netherlands is planning to implement plain packaging. As part of Government initiatives towards their tobacco control policies Netherlands has also begun striking at the heart of tobacco profits. As result the biggest Dutch pension fund and the largest pension fund in Europe stopped investing in tobacco. This has resulted in 3 billion euros less in investments from the finance sector going to tobacco companies. The strategy of the Netherlands is to convince more financial companies that investing in tobacco is bad for business and for their profit margins. This, according to Blokhuis, would be the final knockout of the tobacco industry. Moreover, Mr Blokhuis supported the view that tobacco producers should be financially responsible for the damage they caused to the environment.
2. **Reinforcing policies and commitments among parties to end tobacco industry interference in tobacco control talks:** at the end of the Conference, parties agreed unanimously to adopting policies to eliminate the influence of tobacco companies and redouble the defences against evolving tobacco industry tactics. As a way to prevent industry interference in the meetings the proposal that stands is for all parties, except for NGOs, to submit voluntarily declarations of the interest form: every government delegate would have to inform if they have any connection with the tobacco sector. One other proposal works in response to the so-called “evolving industry tactics to undermine health” and what the FCTC considers to be the most sophisticated of these tactics is

the Smokefreeworld Foundation funded by Philip Morris. The Convention will adopt a new tool to strengthen the tobacco control efforts. The Term Strategy Framework will settle, according to the FCTC, a new action plan to scale up the global control agenda.

3. **The environment:** was also a high point of the agenda and the statements made about it were clear: “tobacco control efforts must begin to prioritize strategies to combat the destructive impacts of tobacco not only on public health, but also on the environment and sustainable development”. At the Conference a new study was presented addressing the environmental damages of tobacco growing and its supply chain ([FCTC studies COP8](#)). This study claims the high cost of tobacco production on the environment with main emphasis on deforestation, use of scarce arable land, intensive use of pesticides and inappropriate use of water. As part of the discussions on how to best tackle this issue, a proposal is on the table to joint objectives of the two global treaties on climate change and tobacco control. The Secretariat invited parties to address the environmental externalities associated with tobacco growing and manufacturing.

**The provisional report** published by the FCTC Secretariat remains poor and vague on the main focal points of the treaty. Most of the conclusions deferred to COP9 to be finalized and the reason the Secretariat points to this problem is the lack of resources the Convention is facing to implement the treaty worldwide. On plain packaging the report claims to be consistent with WTO rules. A momentum has been created by the inclusion of the WHO FCTC implementations as a target under the sustainable development goals (SDG) 3. Moreover, the recommendation is made by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations that all United Nations agencies should adopt a policy not to accept funds from the tobacco Industry.

4. **Article 9&10** were considered two of the least implemented ones and mentions were made about the lack of organization of this Working Group along these years to come up with a proper report. However, other statements were made giving these two articles a high rate of complexity making it difficult to reach consensus. Therefore it was proposed to

suspend the mandate of the working group and to replace it by an expert group which would examine the reasons for the low rate of implementation of articles 9&10 and report back on COP9.

5. **On new products** the Committee considered a draft decision entitled “novel tobacco products including heated tobacco products” submitted by a party. The purpose was to assist parties in monitoring the use of novel tobacco products and assist parties in monitoring the use of novel tobacco products, developing appropriate regulatory measures and dealing with regulatory challenges relating to classification and emissions. A comprehensive report was requested on the health impact and addictive potential of novel products.
6. **On article 5.3** a request was made to the Convention to continue promoting policy coherence on article 5.3 within the United Nations system and to establish a knowledge hub on 5.3 to disseminate best practices on the implementation of article 5.3. A toolkit on article 19 (tobacco industry’s liability) was also launched. Parties noted that article 19 could be a powerful instrument for holding the tobacco industry accountable and urged the Secretariat to continue striving to develop a database and to report on its progress at the ninth session of the COP.
7. **On article 17&18** (alternative livelihoods and protection of the environment) it was stressed that any policies aimed at promoting alternatives to tobacco farming must be evidence based and locally relevant if they were to be workable. Otherwise, there would be a risk of destroying the livelihoods of tobacco farmers and breeding poverty, thus going against SDG1. Tobacco growing must be modelled and piloted to ensure that they were economically viable before the tobacco-growing infrastructure is to be dismantled. The adverse environmental effects of tobacco growing must be distinguished from those of agriculture in general. For the complete provisional report, [check here](#)
8. **Closing remarks:** The Head of the Secretariat, Vera da Costa e Silva on her closure remarks mentioned that part of the tobacco industry was to claim that COP is against farmers that grow tobacco but nothing, according to her, was further from the truth. Costa e Silva explained that

the decision on article 17 will support the FCTC work on finding sustainable alternatives livelihoods for farmers and Brazil have been a champion by showing its concern about Brazilian tobacco growers. She recognized that tobacco growers were the most vulnerable part of the supply chain

Costa e Silva will step down of her position at next COP9 as her terms will end by then.